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Terrorist guilty in CIA attack Duxbury doctor was killed; [South, South Star Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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The first-degree murder conviction was for the killing of Lansing Bennett, who lived and worked in Duxbury from 1954 to 1980. The 66-year-old Bennett then went to work for the State Department and the CIA, traveling around the world and keeping tabs on the health of political figures.

Full Text (648 words)

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A jury deliberated four hours before finding Mir Aimal Kasi guilty of one count of capital murder, another count of first-degree murder and three counts of malicious wounding.

The first-degree murder conviction was for the killing of Lansing Bennett, who lived and worked in Duxbury from 1954 to 1980. The 66-year-old Bennett then went to work for the State Department and the CIA, traveling around the world and keeping tabs on the health of political figures.

Bennett's most lasting accomplishment in Duxbury was convincing the town to buy more than 1,000 acres of land to preserve it as open space. He also wrote a column for the weekly Duxbury Clipper and was an avid sailor.

"He loved Duxbury," his son Andrew said last night. "It was truly the small town for him. I can't say enough about how much he loved Duxbury."

Andrew Bennett said his father was devoted to preserving open space. "He had a lot of foresight about the land, before people really began to think about it that way," he said.

Don Connors, a Duxbury lawyer who worked with Bennett on conservation issues, heaped praise on Bennett's efforts. "He was an extremely important man for Duxbury. He mobilized people. He was the man who made it happen," he said.

Bennett gave up his practice in 1980 to work as a State Department doctor, assigned to far-flung destinations 1

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like Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro until 1991. He then joined the CIA as an analyst.

Bennett prepared reports on the health of world leaders such as Boris Yeltsin, which were ultimately reviewed by the joint chiefs of staff and the president.

Andrew Bennett said the family has come to terms with his father's death, but still welcomed news of Kasi's conviction. "It was more surprising to me that he was caught. I thought he'd never be captured," he said.

Bennett and CIA employee Frank Darling, 28, died in their cars on Jan. 25, 1993, while stopped in morning traffic in Langley, Va. Two other CIA workers and a telephone company employee were wounded.

Kasi walked amid the stopped cars and fired at people inside them with an AK-47 assault rifle. He was supposedly angry at U.S. interference in Muslim nations.

Kasi, 33, showed no emotion as the verdicts were read.

Kasi was sentenced to life in prison for Bennett's death. Jurors were to decide today whether to recommend the death sentence or life in prison for Darling's murder. Kasi also received maximum sentences of 20 years each for the three malicious wounding counts and 18 years for firearms violations.

In court yesterday, prosecutors told jurors there was no question that Kasi gunned down the two CIA employees.

"In this case, there's no mystery. It's not even close -- the killer, the shooter, is right there," Commonwealth's Attorney Robert Horan said, pointing to Kasi. "He was there to shoot CIA employees. He did what he went there for."

FBI agents said Kasi confessed to the shootings and was angry over the U.S. bombing of Iraq and the influence America exerts abroad, especially in Muslim nations.

Kasi remained a fugitive for four years, prompting an international manhunt before he was captured in a hotel in Pakistan in June.

Kasi's lawyers put no witnesses on the stand, instead arguing that the prosecution did not prove Kasi intended to kill anyone. His confession came only after he was held in shackles, defense attorney Frank Romano said.

"It is simple to convict a person if you believe he is guilty," Romano said. While acknowledging that the victims were innocent, Romano said, "Their innocence is not proof of Mr. Kasi's guilt."

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